



Portland Poynts

The Chronicle of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society

July - August 2020

27 Prospect Circle, P. O. Box 108, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716-0108 ♦ www.AHhistory.org

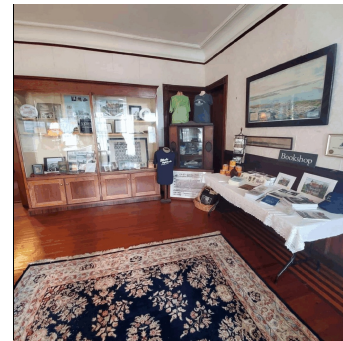
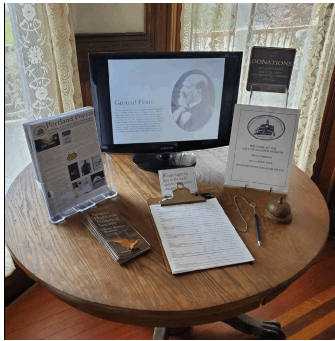
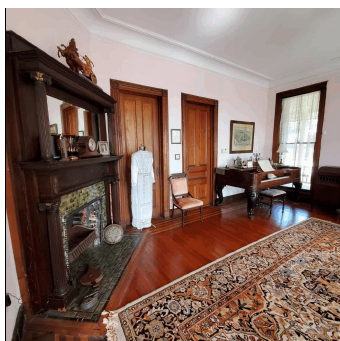
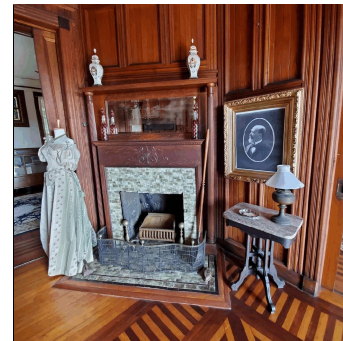


The Strauss Mansion Museum is tentatively set to reopen on Sundays for self-guided tours on August 9th 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Tours will be BY APPOINTMENT ONLY to control the number of visitors within the building at one time. Admission policies and instructions for making an appointment are on the website. If you are planning a visit, please read the policies carefully.

Atlantic Highlands Historical Society volunteers — including 17-year-old Wall resident Brett Servilla — gathered recently at the Strauss Mansion Museum to do a thorough cleanup. The Mansion closed mid-December, 2019 for its usual winter hiatus and remained closed due to the statewide shutdown for a total of six months. A thorough cleaning was necessary: dusting, sweeping, polishing, washing. As we reopen, some rooms may be closed to the public. We are following all health recommendations to ensure the well-being of visitors and volunteers and appreciate your cooperation.

In addition to the cleaning, several exhibits were reorganized to better display the extensive holdings of the museum. Below are photographs showing the results.

We are delighted to be open again and look forward to your visit. Check our website, AHhistory.org, for instructions for scheduling a tour appointment and for updates, particularly regarding future special events.



Online Fund Raising

By Greg Caggiano

On May 21, 2020, the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society launched a fund-raising campaign with the aim of reaching \$2,500 by the end of June. While such a task is not new for any non-profit organization or museum, this one was a special plea, asking for people to consider a non-essential business in these extremely trying times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our tag line was a simple and truthful one: "every dollar counts", because whether you could offer us a single dollar, a hundred dollars, or somewhere in between, it all adds up to keep the door of our headquarters, the Strauss Mansion Museum, open for visitors.

To demonstrate how important every dollar is, last year's total income was \$38,955 raised through various means including donations but mainly events. Our three largest fundraisers were the Arts and Crafts Festival (vendor fees: \$2,178), Fall Flea Market (gift shop table sales, refreshments, and vendor fees: \$7,857), and an October full of film screenings and ghost tours (admissions and refreshments: \$5,157). These three events alone account for \$15,172, a little less than half our total income. Expenses for 2019 were \$35,778. (All of these figures and their specifics are available for perusal in the March-April 2020 Historical Society newsletter.)

Through thousands of volunteer hours and hard work maintaining this historic 127-year-old property, our profit margin was \$3,177. With our 2020 Arts and Crafts Festival already canceled and the Fall Flea Market and October events in jeopardy of cancellation (we don't know what the world will be like come September and October), such a loss of income would put us sorely in the red. This does not even figure in the loss of weekend open houses, gift shop sales, and admission income at our monthly Music at the Mansion concert series, among others.

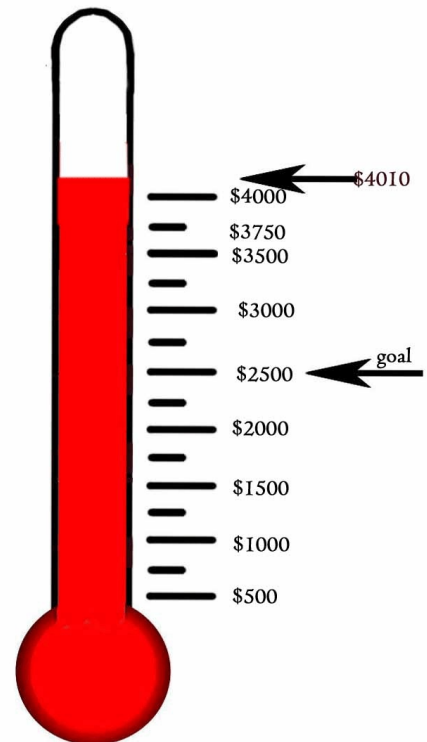
With that being said, our campaign was underway. Through a series of email blasts and Facebook and Instagram postings, donations made their way in. It was after we released on June 4th a video tour of the Strauss Mansion Museum I hosted to show viewers exactly where their donations would be going that the lid really blew off. Within an hour, over \$1,000 poured in and we eclipsed our goal right then and there, 25 days ahead of schedule! More donations would come in the following days, even up until publication of this newsletter.

The video was filmed by AHHS volunteer Patrick Osborn. At the age of 14 Patrick joined our Junior Volunteer Team and was the 2018 Junior Board Member. A sophomore at Elizabethtown College (PA) where he studies communications, his help and editing skills resulted in an excellent film. He made it easier for me since all I had to do was talk! Also helping during the campaign was our newest board member Patty Bickauskas, who shared our many posts on social media to reach

a larger audience which garnered direct results.

I wanted to see if we could achieve this goal without using a major "crowd funding" source such as Go Fund Me or Kickstarter where we would lose a portion of each donation as a fee for letting these websites host the campaign. By going with a completely grassroots effort to steer people directly to our website, this allowed 100% of all proceeds to come directly to us. As of this publication, we received a total of \$4,010.

Fundraising Thermometer



We have really been astounded by the generosity of donors who stepped up to come to our aid during this campaign. Nearly 40 individuals donated between \$10 and \$500. Words cannot really express how grateful the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society is for the generous support.

While the future remains uncertain and we do not know what fate will befall our summer/autumn events or if we will be able to open the Museum for weekend tours, we are in a much better position than we were just a few weeks ago, thanks to your help. Every dollar will go directly to our monthly bills and maintenance (being that the house is 127 year old, such activities to upkeep the place are relentless).

We hope we will see you at some point in 2020. From all of us at the AHHS, we wish you the best of health and luck in these difficult times, and hope you have a wonderful summer!

Along the Bayshore Trail in the Borough of Atlantic Highlands

(Part of the Henry Hudson Trail System)

Reprinted from Atlantic Highlands Independence Week Program July 4, 2008; provided by Doris Irwin.

History of the Henry Hudson Trail

The Henry Hudson Trail is a bike/pedestrian path paved in asphalt over the former right-of-way of the Freehold and Atlantic Highlands Railroad, which was later absorbed by the Central Railroad of New Jersey from Freehold north to Keyport and then east to Atlantic Highlands. The total length is about 22 miles.

The original Bayshore section of the trail is a ten-mile stretch owned by the County of Monmouth that extends from the Atlantic Highlands western border to Aberdeen through seven Bayshore communities. It is partially wooded, crosses wooden bridges in marshes, and has occasional views of the sea.

To flee the oppressive heat and humidity of summer and the polluted air of metropolitan life, well-off urban residents from Newark and New York would often travel to the bucolic Bayshore region of Monmouth county to enjoy the cool breezes and refreshing waters of Raritan and Sandy Hook Bay.

To make transportation throughout the northern section of the Jersey Shore a bit more pleasant, The Central Railroad of New Jersey (CNJ) helped set up a boat-to-rail service from New York to Atlantic Highlands. Upon arrival in Atlantic Highlands, a train hauled many of them away to different resorts or seasonal accommodations in Monmouth County.

The alliance between steamship and railroad helped people easily get to coastal towns along the shore. According to authors Russell Roberts and Rich Youmans in their book, *Down the Jersey Shore* (2000), more than 1,000,000 people in 1926 made the trip from

New York to New Jersey via boat and rail.

Several decades later, however, due to the success of the automobile and the rise of the highway system in America that allowed people to travel great distances, the Central Railroad of New Jersey discontinued passenger service in 1966. This action was preceded by the last freight train operation in 1983.

This portion of the trail opened to the public as a Monmouth County Park System facility in 1992. The Southern extension of the trail occupies the former Freehold Branch Railroad right-of-way, from the Matawan/Aberdeen train station south to County route 536 in Freehold Borough. As the population and road traffic in Monmouth County continues to increase, a safe place to walk and bike, separated from vehicular traffic, becomes an increasingly valued commodity. The extension will eventually connect to the Matawan/Aberdeen train station.

Project Description

Currently, the eastern portion of the Henry Hudson Trail culminates at the Atlantic Highlands Municipal Harbor. The portion of the Henry Hudson Trail, also known as the Bayshore Trail through Atlantic Highlands is a 1.4 mile missing link through Atlantic Highlands, culminating at Popamora Park at the eastern border of the Borough. Monmouth County Parks recently completed construction of additional portions of the trail through Popamora Park and will link through the Borough of Highlands.

The proposed trail will be constructed over the old, abandoned railroad bed and connect Popamora Park to the trail that terminates at the municipal harbor. Limited site clearing will be performed to clear a path for construction of the trail. The trail will be constructed of bituminous material and quarry dust material, and boardwalks are proposed over areas where ground level construction of the trail is not feasible.

Interpretive signs will be located along the trail to provide information to users on the history and ecology of the trail and surrounding area. Incidental items such as stormwater drainage pipes and structures are proposed to maintain the hydrology along the trail.

To mitigate the impact on the wetlands along the trail corridor, the Wagner Creek Mitigation Project has been designed. A pocket wetland area of approximately 3 acres along Wagner Creek and the Sandy Hook Bay will be reconstructed to eradicate the existing evasive phragmites. New, indigenous wetlands plantings will be planted in this area.

The County's overall vision for the eastern portion of the Henry Hudson Trail is to continue through both the Borough of Atlantic Highlands and the Borough of Highlands, over the Route 36 Bridge and connect to the existing trail system within the Sandy Hook Gateway National Recreation Area.

The 1.4-mile extension trail will be built on the abandoned railroad right-of-way owned by the Borough of Atlantic Highlands. This location maintains the original planning strategy of continuing to link communities by revitalizing defunct railroad beds. ●



Funding History

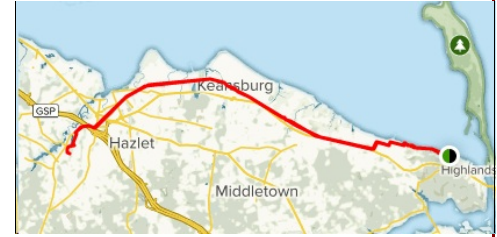
Atlantic Highlands received a \$366,000 Federal grant and a \$125,000 County Open Space grant for the Bayshore Trail. Maser Consulting designed the trail and obtained all the required permits, including wetland mitigation approval along Wagner Creek. The Borough recently received an additional \$300,000 through the NJDOT Local Air Program for Bikeways.

Site Features

Upon completion of the trail, residents from all over the region will be able to enjoy the breathtaking view of the Sandy Hook Bay and the New York skyline while enjoying the outdoors and being physically active.

2020 Monmouth County Park System Website Update

The northern trail section runs 12 miles (just north of and parallel to Route 36) from the Aberdeen/Keyport border at the intersection of Lloyd Road and Clark Street to the Leonardo section of Middletown/Atlantic Highlands border at Avenue D. After sharing the road, the trail resumes at the Atlantic Highlands Marina and continues along Sandy Hook Bay to Popamora Point on the Atlantic Highlands/Highlands border. The Henry Hudson Trail Activity Center is located on Highway 36, Leonardo near the intersection Highway 36/Avenue D, Atlantic Highlands.



Currently, the trail runs four miles from Rt. 537 in Freehold to Big Brook Park in Marlboro then resumes at Station Road in Marlboro and continues for five miles to Church Street in Matawan. Future plans for the Trail include linking these two sections of trail and providing a connection to the original, northern section of the Henry Hudson Trail.

The varied scenery as well as the beautifully maintained conditions are just two reasons why the Henry Hudson Trail was selected to be part of the National Rails-to-Trails Network.

Back in 1894... the Strauss family would have been reading about...

July 3 ~ Dow Jones publishes its first stock index, the Dow Jones Transportation Average.

July 4 ~ First U.S. bullfight held in Dodge City, Kansas.

July 4 ~ The Statue of Liberty (Liberty Enlightening the World) is presented to the U.S. in Paris.

July 5 ~ German consul-general Gustav Nachtigal takes possession of Cameroon.

July 5 ~ U.S. Congress accept 2nd Chinese Exclusion Act.

July 10 ~ First Test Cricket to be played at Old Trafford.

July 15 ~ Wimbledon Men's Tennis: 4 consecutive Wimbledon titles for William Renshaw; beats Herbert Lawford 6-0, 6-4, 9-7.

July 19 ~ Wimbledon Women's Tennis: Maud Watson becomes inaugural female champion by beating her sister Lillian Watson 6-8, 6-3, 6-3.

July 21 ~ First Test Cricket match played at Lord's.

July 27 ~ The East Cleveland Street Railway Company begins the first U.S. commercial electric streetcar line in Cleveland, Ohio on the Bentley-Knight system.

July 29 ~ Society of Independent Artists founded in Paris by Albert Dubois-Pillet, Odilon Redon, Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.

July 30 ~ Nonpareil Dempsey (John Edward Kelly) fights George Fulljames, possibly the first middleweight fight with boxing gloves.

Aug 5 ~ Cornerstone for Statue of Liberty laid on Bedloe's Island, New York harbor)

Aug 7 ~ Germany annexes Angra Pequena (Southwest-Africa).

Aug 12 ~ Bill Murdoch scores First Test Cricket double-century, 211 at The Oval.

Aug 27 ~ U.S. National Championship Men's Tennis, Newport R.I.: Richard Sears makes it 4 straight U.S. singles titles; beats Howard Taylor 6-0, 1-6, 6-0, 6-2.

Aug 28 ~ First known photograph of a tornado is made near Howard, South Dakota.

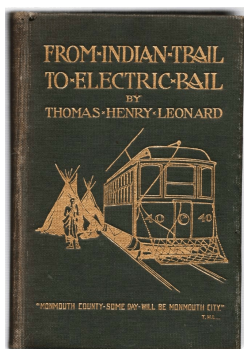


Blast from the Past—Atlantic Highland Style

Promoting the digitization of the Atlantic Journal

By Patty Bickauskas

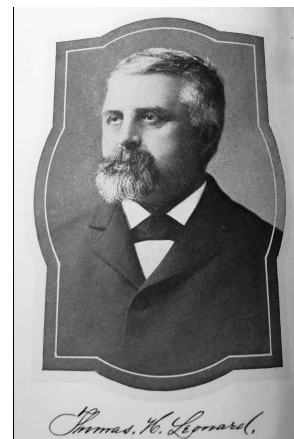
Thomas Leonard and Observatory Park



I was fortunate enough to obtain my own personal copy of Thomas Leonard's book *From Indian Trail to Electric Rail* from Ebay. When I received it, I was excited to find that it appeared to be one of the original copies of his book. It came with an envelope addressed to his oldest daughter Clara Hendrickson. On the inside cover is a note, signed and dated September 1, 1923, written by Thomas Leonard to his daughter explaining that he was giving this book to her. Within the book there are notes written on some of the pages as if she was editing the book for him.

There are several copies of his book in the Strauss Mansion library. Hopefully, when the quarantine is over, you will visit the Mansion on a Sunday afternoon and sit in the library or perhaps on our beautifully renovated wraparound porch and read some of the history of this town and the surrounding areas from one of our copies.

You may not be aware that Thomas Leonard was the first mayor of Atlantic Highlands, elected in 1886 and serving for eight years. Leonard was born in Middletown and worked on his father's farm until the age of 28. He had an idea to develop the farming land into a town of what is now Atlantic Highlands, Leonardo and Leonardville. In 1872, he laid out Mount Avenue and the first road up the hill. On the eastern side of Mount Avenue, there was an area called Observatory Park. A wealthy man, Leonard commissioned and paid to have built a tower in the park that people could ascend, free of charge. I believe anyone that owns the 1894 town map will be able to see this tower located to the left of Prospect Circle.



Thomas H. Leonard is buried in the Leonard family plot at the Fair View Cemetery in Middletown, NJ.

On the next page is an excerpt from a rather lengthy article that appeared in the *Atlantic Journal* on August 26, 1897. The writings describe, in a flowery romantic way, the 360 degree views from the tower. Reading the article, I can understand why Atlantic Highlands was a popular tourist destination back then, as it remains today. I hope you enjoy this article and will continue to support the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Strauss Mansion Museum is tentatively schedule to reopen for self-guided tours BY APPOINTMENT ONLY on Sunday, August 9th, 1:00- 4:00 pm. For information on how to schedule a visit and the policies that are applicable, please check our website www.AHhistory.org. Scheduled events have been cancelled. Visit Facebook, Instagram, or sign up for email news alerts as we monitor this situation. Our website includes photo albums and extensive online archives.

The Atlantic Highlands Historical Society is a volunteer-run organization. The Society has no endowment and depends on memberships, donations and program income to pay for daily operations. While we are closed during this pandemic, income has suspended. Unfortunately, certain utility and insurance bills must still be paid in order to maintain the integrity of the building. If you have not renewed your membership this year, please consider doing so now. Of course, donations would be gratefully received.

We hope to be open soon. We want everyone to be safe.

Fall Flea Market Cancelled



Unfortunately, for the first time in 41 years, there will be no Fall Flea Market at the harbor. Originally scheduled for September 19th, we cannot foresee how our state will look three months from now and with social distancing requirements limiting the amount of vendors and visitors in the area at a given time, we have deemed it to not be worthwhile.

We hope the flea market will be back in 2021. We thank everyone for their participation and inquiries over the last four decades.

THE SUMMIT OF OBSERVATORY PARK

A View from the Tower 220 Feet Above Water Level
A Magnificent View of the Ocean, Bay and Landscape

A Popular Resort For Sightseers

The other day I sauntered lazily hill ward with intent to seek a change by inhaling the fragrance of the wood and the undergrowth. Way up the hills, almost hidden by the tall trees, there was situated the large observatory. Climbing its 47 steps skyward, there was spread a scene of incomparable beauty, scarcely to be described. The top of the tower is 40 feet above its base and the ground descends from it on all sides. The platform at the top, which is about 10 feet square, has a bench on one side and a rail to protect the observers and to afford them needed rest after their weary ascent cloud ward.

Looking northward, or in fact in any direction, the scene is sublime. Toward the east is the ever-changing panorama of the great sea, bearing upon its bosom thousands of crafts from the great stately ocean steamer, the large merchantmen, down to the humble soft skiffs of the fishermen which at that height and distance seem to resemble sea fowl skimming merrily hither and thither over the waters. It is very pretty to gaze upon.

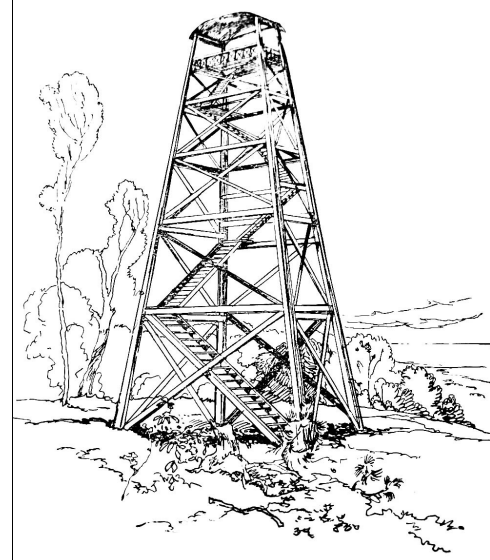
Turning the eye toward the north there is to be seen far off Rockaway Beach, then Coney island with its mammoth hotels and other attractions; thence South Brooklyn, the towers of the bridge, Trinity's spire, the Statue of Liberty, Staten Island's village's and shores, including South Beach, the Kills, then Raritan and Middletown's shores and the pretty villages fringing them and the railroad line— Lorillard's, Keansburg, Port Monmouth, Belford, Leonardville, and last from the western direction, Leonard avenue station, etc. Brevent Park with its ever-growing increase of Cottages, till down nearly to your feet, lie the symmetrical avenues of Atlantic Highlands' Hubbard tract and the fair Atlantic Highlands itself, with its pretty cottages and its avenues, crossing at direct right angles, or in sinuous form upon the hills, to give variety to scenery in enchantingly romantic views.

Turn your eyes again to the southwest, and they meet the great chain of wooded hills back from ancient Middletown to and beyond Holmdel. Now let the aspect change. Look southward, the lovely, charming hillside, dotted with tasteful cottages and backed on the hills with dense growth of woodland that forms a magnificent frame for a natural picture, of wondrous beauty, the lower lands seeming to be "Stretching in pensive quietness between"— that is, between the tall chestnuts and oaks cresting the hills and the sure and certain approach of the cottagers seeking "pastures new".

Let the eye continue further to the southeast, the silvery ribbons of the Shrewsbury rivers, dotted on their banks with incomparable villas, on perfect roads, relieved with patches of woodland that make it a vast park apparently planned on a most comprehensive scale.

Further yet, the great hotels of Long Branch and the wide endless sea, the invigorating air from which seems to stimulate the lungs with new energy, the heart to enjoy new sensation; famous Rumson Beach, Seabright — the mind to say "God is infinite," The brain becomes intoxicated with an indescribable pleasure in viewing this vast picture painted by nature in its happiest of moods.

This tower, built on the high land of Observatory Park, was a gift of Mayor Thomas Henry Leonard, and is free to all seeking its advantages. Hundreds and hundreds go up the stairs and descend them with feeling absolute satisfaction.



LEONARD OBSERVATORY TOWER.

"B.E.N.N.Y." Est. 1879?

By Greg Caggiano

New Yorkers arriving en masse to the Jersey Shore is nothing new. In fact, it began as early as 1879 in Atlantic Highlands with the construction of a pier for the first steamship (the Marion) to travel back and forth to New York City. Transportation was heavily expanded by 1892 to keep up with demand of tourists when the Central Railroad of New Jersey opened additional steam and railroad routes including eight passenger platforms near where the Marina is. By 1907, Atlantic Highlands was at its peak as a day-trip destination with thousands of people visiting every day in the summer. Fourteen trains arrived daily, as well as journeys from the steamers Sandy Hook, Monmouth, and Asbury Park which ran all day long. Aside from "bathing" (the term for swimming back then), Atlantic Highlands boasted nearly 70 hotels at one point, resorts, and excursions to other areas of the shore. Such intense activity would gradually fade away over the decades as additional train lines and the Garden State Parkway made beach towns farther south in New Jersey more accessible. For those not familiar with the term "B.E.N.N.Y.", it is a local term referring to tourists from the Bayonne, Elizabeth, Newark, and New York areas (actually all of North Jersey) who descend on the Jersey Shore in summertime. It is not exactly a term of endearment: [slang] a rude, disrespectful tourist/summer resident at the Jersey Shore, typically from New York or North Jersey.

